



REPRESENTATIVE

AL O'BRIEN

Public Safety Newsletter

Dear neighbors,

I have been chairman of the Criminal Justice and Corrections committee for several years, dealing with issues of crime and punishment. This session, the focus of the committee has changed. The committee is now called Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

I am now working on emergency preparedness, natural disaster readiness and terrorism.

We got a taste of disaster readiness with the recent windstorm, with thousands of families losing power for days.

That was preceded by a freak snow storm that turned our roads and highways into a moonscape of abandoned cars and buses.

I believe we must be better prepared for the next storm or disaster.

This newsletter is my chance to give you the information you need to protect your family.

I also want to hear from you. What was your experience during the windstorm or snowstorm? Was your neighborhood affected by the November flood? And what could we do to better inform and protect our citizens before the next one occurs -- or, God forbid, a terrorist attack? Included in this newsletter is a short survey that I hope you have time to fill out. I'm interested in your thoughts, and in hearing your story.

Thank you for taking the time to read this newsletter. It's an honor and a privilege serving as your representative in the Legislature. I hope this newsletter finds you and your family well, and I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in green ink that reads "Al O'Brien". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Rep. Al O'Brien

D-Mountlake Terrace

State Representative, 1st Legislative District

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Protecting your family from disasters

We're lucky not to suffer from the tornados that ravage the Midwest every year, or the hurricanes that hit Gulf states like Louisiana and Florida.

But we do face threats.

- **Earthquakes** — We sit next to a huge fault, with scientists telling us it's just a matter of time before that fault slips again and a giant earthquake hits. We saw what damage a moderate earthquake could do a few years ago. But the big one will be much more powerful, and we need to be better prepared.
- **Floods** — Since we get so much rain, floods happen, and they can't be completely prevented, no matter how high we build our levees.
- **Windstorms and blizzards** — The recent storms exposed our weaknesses, especially in dealing with power outages and transportation. We can do better.
- **Pandemics** — Experts say the deadly avian flu could mutate into something even more dangerous than the Spanish Flu of 1918, which killed millions around the world.
- **Terrorism** — Washington state is an international hub for trade and travel, so experts tell us we're a tempting target.

I'm not pessimistic about these threats. Our state is strong and prosperous. We've survived disasters before, and we can handle the next one.

I am working hard to ensure that we are better prepared.

Giving you the tools you need to protect your family

You've probably seen the ads on TV: three days, three ways. www.govlink.org/3days3ways

If another windstorm or snow storm hits, police, fire-fighters and the National Guard can't get to everyone right away. Every family should be ready to survive on their own for at least three days until help arrives.

Three steps to protect your family:

- Make a plan
- Build a kit
- Get involved



Making a plan

Every family should have an emergency plan. You need to establish a rendezvous point if telephones and cell phones aren't working, and to make plans with your neighbors about helping each other during an emergency.

Here is a nine-step plan for your family from the state's Department of Emergency Management:

- 1 – Take care of your loved ones. Check on them and make sure everyone is OK before doing anything else.
- 2 – Protect your head, feet and hands. Put on a bicycle helmet to protect yourself from falling debris, sturdy shoes or boots for broken glass and leather gloves.
- 3 – Turn off the natural gas or propane at your home – and at your neighbors, if they're gone. This is the best way to prevent fires.
- 4 – Shut off water at the house main to trap water inside your house and keep any pollutants out of possible sources for drinking water, such as your water heater.
- 5 – Put a sign in a window that says OK or HELP, so neighbors and emergency workers know whether your family needs help.
- 6 – Put your fire extinguisher on the sidewalk or where neighbors can see it, in case it's needed.
- 7 – Go to a neighborhood gathering site – a home, church, community center – that you set up with your neighbors ahead of time.
- 8 – Form teams at the gathering site. Team 1 will listen to the Emergency Alert System (AM or FM) or to a NOAA Weather Radio and keep neighbors informed. Team 2 visits neighbors who are elderly, disabled or where small children may be home alone. Team 3 checks all natural gas meters and propane tanks, shutting off gas as necessary. Team 4 goes to houses with "HELP" signs in the window or no sign at all, and is prepared to give first aid.
- 9 – All teams should return to the neighborhood gathering site and report what they've learned or done.

Building a kit

At a minimum, you need:

- Three days worth of food
- Three gallons of water per family member (*one gallon a day*)
- Battery operated radio, flashlights and batteries
- Blankets, extra clothes and sturdy shoes
- Ibuprofen, thermometer and alcohol-based hand wash
- Special need items such as medications, extra eyeglasses or food for your pet

Getting involved

There are three easy steps to getting involved.

- 1 – **Get trained** — in CPR and first aid, in basic health sanitation or in CERT (Community Emergency Response Teams)
- 2 – Talk to your neighbors — Develop a neighborhood map with contact names and numbers, neighbors with special skills or equipment and a gathering site everyone can reach.
- 3 – Get active — Join your local Neighborhood Watch or sign up with the Citizen Corps, a nationwide effort to organize and train citizens with the skills they need to protect their family and neighbors.



A fast, coordinated response

The toughest problem is making sure all of the pieces fit together, that the state works hand-in-glove with city and county emergency workers, the National Guard and federal agencies, like the Coast Guard.

Already this session, we've held days of hearings in Olympia on this issue.

Some of this is simply working out bugs. Training exercises have pointed out problems, like police and fire departments around our state having incompatible radios. It will take money and time to fix that sort of problem.

The other part is making sure everybody is working together as a team. Is there a clear chain of command? Is everyone working from the same plan and the same maps?

Fighting crime

I'm also working on a number of new laws to make our neighborhoods and highways safer. Some involve:

- **Car thieves** — This is a statewide problem, with criminal gangs running car-theft rings in cities around our state. We're working on a statewide solution to bust these rings and locking up repeat offenders for longer periods.
- **High-speed chases** — High-speed chases are especially dangerous and the cause of many injuries and deaths. This bill toughens the penalties for eluding the police.
- **Meth Task Force** — Meth is still the most dangerous drug out there, and we have to do a better job of preventing people from getting hooked and destroying their lives.
- **ID theft** — We are establishing a regional task force to deal with ID theft. It will involve a federal postal inspector, the state attorney general and state and local police agencies.

The Washington state Long-Term Care Ombudsman program is looking for volunteer ombudsmen. If you want to help, please call Mary Fogh, volunteer coordinator, at 206-694-6703.

STATE REPRESENTATIVE **AL O'BRIEN**
1ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Hearing from you

I'd like to hear about your family's experiences. Please take a second to fill out this short survey.
Thank you again. Your thoughts are important to me.

Disasters

Which emergencies or disasters do you believe are the biggest threats to your neighborhood?

- ☐ Floods
- ☐ Forest fires
- ☐ Windstorms
- ☐ Snow storms
- ☐ Earthquakes
- ☐ Terrorism

Windstorm

Did you lose power during last year's windstorm?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you lost power, how long did it take to restore power?

- ☐ Same day
- ☐ A few days
- ☐ Longer

Were you affected by falling trees?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Floods

Was your family or neighborhood touched by last November's floods?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Snow storm

Were you affected by the recent blizzard and freezing temperatures?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

If you were affected, please explain

- ☐ Trouble driving
- ☐ Frozen pipes
- ☐ Other _____

Emergencies

Does your family have an emergency plan?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Your family's story, or your thoughts and ideas about preparing for disasters

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